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ABSTRACT

With the growing recognition of the importance of personal narratives as a tool for promoting and analyzing professional development, this study looked at what trends emerged from the personal narratives of female graduate students (most of whom were also teachers) when they were categorized by their rhetorical function and by stereotypical styles of female communication. The study conducted a deconstructive, qualitative study of the writings of five female students of curriculum design at a large urban university. The narratives were analyzed in two ways: an individual analysis of each and then consultation with the authors about the intent of their writing. Results indicated that: (1) four of the five writers discussed the significant importance of either a teacher, student, or colleague; (2) all of the women placed emphasis on the processes, not products, of problem-solving in organizing their teaching; (3) most rejected the opportunity for emotion in organizing their teaching and approached topics logically by manipulating a guiding text, responding to a speaker's works, or rationalizing their own beliefs; and (4) none of the writers engaged in questioning or inquiry as a means of initiating further research. (Contains 18 references.) (JB)

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# Personal Narratives and Graduate-Level Education: How Does Gender Influence Writing and Thinking About Curriculum?

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Personal narratives--journals, autobiographies, diaries, and other private writings--are often viewed as a form of "literacy practice that has little merit." Journals, for example, are sometimes viewed only as a "recounting of daily events." Other personal self-expressions are often considered too emotional and personal to be embraced as serious literary writings (Gannett, 1991, p. 99).

This traditional view of personal narratives is quickly changing, however. Across academe, many are realizing that the "academic self" does not act apart from the "personal self" (Tompkins, 1987; Goodson, 1994; Gudmundsdottir, 1991). Indeed, personal narratives can serve as "powerful vehicles of the intellect, as engines that warm and drive the mind, capable of doubling back or going great distances, carrying with them the maps and memories of all previous trips, along with plans for the next" (Gannett, 1991, p. 99). As a result, personal narrative has become an important tool for promoting and analyzing the professional development of academics. This "legitimate" use of personal narrative has implications for curriculum planners, designers, and teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). More specifically, narratives and personal writings have three practical applications in the field of education: They serve as an organizing structure (Gudmundsdottir, 1991), elicit reflective thinking (Hoover, 1994), and act as an inquiry impetus in the research process (Gudmundsdottir, 1991; Gannett, 1991).

If the "personal self" does play an important role in the academic and professional endeavors of curriculum planners and teachers, studying the personal narratives of educators through systematic inquiry can lead to a better understanding of the development of curriculum and pedagogical decisions as they travel to their fruition. Deconstruction is a valuable method of inquiry (Lauer & Asher, 1988); and since gender plays a large role in communication, examining personal narratives through the gender-filters of a critical theorist allows for a new approach in examining personal narratives.

When considering a collision between the views of one who places significance in personal narrative and the views of one who values gender as a key to understanding

communication, a massive research question comes to mind: In the field of education, what are the potential ramifications of males or females placing "stock" in their own personal narratives? To answer such a monstrous question in the confines of such a limited study will only lead to a set of false assumptions and unwarranted conclusions. However, by beginning the search for answers to this larger question, this paper hopefully will serve as an impetus for more comprehensive and methodical research projects in the area of personal narratives, gender, and education.

So, this study starts with a more limited question in hopes of initiating a dialogue: What trends emerge from the personal narratives of female graduate students--most of whom are currently teachers--when they are categorized both in terms of their rhetorical function--providing an organizing structure, eliciting reflective thinking, and acting as an inquiry impetus for research--and in terms of the stereotypical styles of female communication--a desire for connection with others and an emotionally driven approach to problem solving?

In an effort to answer this question, I performed a deconstructive, qualitative study on the writings of female students of curriculum design. This paper summarizes the relevant literature, details my methodology and findings, and offers a new set of potential research questions arising from this research.

## Review of the Literature

Before examining the ways personal narrative and gender interact, a literature review must cover each topic individually: To begin, I will examine the literature discussing the personal narratives of teachers; then I will address literature dealing with gender differences in communication. In both sections of this literature review, my goal is to provide a framework for understanding the data analysis in this study.

## Personal Narratives

The personal narratives of teachers can play a legitimate role in their own professional development (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). As mentioned earlier, personal narratives have three practical applications in the field of education: They often serve as an organizational tool (Gudmundsdottir, 1991; Graham, 1991; Tompkins, 1987), a "mirror" for reflective thinking (Hoover, 1994; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Graham, 1991), and an inquiry impetus in the research process (Bean and Zulick, 1989; Gudmundsdottir, 1991; Goodson, 1994).

First, personal narratives serve as a way of making sense of the world by providing a method for organizing knowledge. Novice teachers often use narratives to help interpret the curriculum; experienced teachers use narratives to organize past knowledge for future use (Gudmundsdottir, 1991). For both novice and experienced teachers, knowledge is "perspectival" and cultural; knowledge comes from the self (Tompkins, 1987). Graham (1991) agrees by noting that both a reconceptualization of the theory/practice dichotomy and an active knowledge generation results from autobiographical narrative. Such reconceptualization and generation is valuable in organizing experiences into manageable and useful groups.

Second, personal narratives can serve as an impetus for reflection (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Writings can be "mirrors" that create opportunities for teachers to see if there is "congruence between what they espouse in theory versus their daily actions" (Hoover, 1994, p. 92). Stated a different way, personal narratives can help identify elements and themes in a teacher or curriculum designer's practice that recur over time (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Often, the reflective mirror casts an image of the teacher's own childhood: "[Teachers] learn a great deal . . . from reflecting on their experiences as children in school" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, pp. 198-199).

Third, writings can serve as an opportunity for raising questions and hypotheses (Bean and Zulick, 1989). As teachers and curriculum designers write about their own

activities, questions will be raised. After all, writing serves as a method of invention, questioning, and exploring new areas (Elbow, 1973). Not only can such writings raise questions for the authors, but also the authors' writings can raise research issues for theorists and other interested stakeholders (Goodson, 1994): "The Teller is expected to make it worth the listener's while by raising for evaluation or contemplation that which is problematic or unusual about the narrative conflict and its resolution" (Brodkey, 1989). For both the teacher as writer and the theorist as audience, personal narratives can help raise viable issues and help determine the next appropriate step in a research process.

## Gender Differences in Communication

Literature discussing the differences between communication strategies of women and men has gained popularity. Interestingly, as with personal narratives, sources dealing with communication differences between genders were once dismissed by academics as a part of pop culture. Books like *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) and *You Just Don't Understand* (Tannen, 1990) were simply the newest counselors for the heart-broken and love-torn. However, when examined on a deeper level, and combined with other academic literature about communication differences and gender, these books can have a strong impact on academic thought. Two distinct contrasts between the communication of men and the communication of women emerge: the logical manipulation of products versus the emotional emphasis on processes in problem solving (Gannett, 1991; Gilligan, 1982) and themes of separation versus themes of connection in dealing with others (Flynn, 1990; Gannett 1991; Gray, 1991).

Gannett (1991) first refers to the gender difference of problem solving. In solving problems, men attempt to exhibit power and control over language, knowledge, and tools of communication. That is, men place emphasis on "specific rhetorical modes and forms of logical development (formal logic and antagonistic structures like debates or certain forms of argumentation), aggressivity (interruption and topic control), selective nondisclosure and

territoriality (strictly defined boundaries separating genres, texts, and life, speakers and listeners, writers and readers)" (p. 187). Carol Gilligan (1982), in her book *In a Different Voice*, supports Gannett's position. Based on a "rights and responsibilities study" that Gilligan performed on a random sample of people, men appear to rely on "conventions of logic" in trying to solve problems and deal with the world around them. When logic does not "work" in solving a problem, men tend to become irritated and angry.

Conversely, women often neglect the logical manipulation of a product as an option for solving problems. Instead, a woman is more likely to rely on the "process of communication" (Gilligan, 1982) toward the goal of "expressing herself and being understood" (Gray, 1992, p. 36). Often, these self-expressions tend to be more emotionally based than logically based. When the process of communication fails or is ineffective, women do not become angry and irritated as the men do. Instead, they are often overcome by feelings of exhaustion or self-blame (Gilligan, 1982).

The results of women rejecting a logical, product approach to problem solving in order to take a more emotional, process approach are obvious: "Women have been taught by generations of men that males have greater powers of rationality than females have. When a male professor presents only the impeccable products of his thinking, it is especially difficult for a woman student to believe that she can produce such a thought" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule, 1986, pp. 216-217).

In addition to differences in problem solving strategies, researchers note large deviations between the ways women and men relate to other people. Gannett (1991) argues that in spite of the fact women are the "muted" part of society, they tend to thrive on connection, collaboration, and interpersonal relations with others. Women's journals tend to be "interpersonally focused" and contain more "extended and reflective entries regarding their social, academic, and personal lives" than the journals of the men (p. 170). Beth Flynn (1990) and Gilligan (1982) echo these views by noting definite differences between

the kind of separating--measuring themselves against an ideal society--that males do, and the connections--activities that demonstrate care for others--that women strive for.

This male separation and measurement is characterized by self-promotion, messages of personal achievement, and a struggle to meet their own needs (Gannett, 1991; Gray, 1991): That is, men tend to use their journals "in a powerful and useful way for focusing, managing, and releasing pressure from academic and social responsibility" (Gannett, 1991, p. 163).

## Methodology

Remember, my purpose here is to begin a dialogue about the ramifications of males and females--each unique in their style of communication--valuing their personal narratives as a professional tool. To begin this dialogue, I ask a question which focuses on emerging trends in personal narratives that have been examined by their function and by the stereotypical communication styles of women.

For this study, I solicited the personal narratives of female students enrolled in a Curriculum Design and Evaluation class at a large urban university. Five women shared excerpts with me. While a sample size of five may seem small, my goal was to examine the writings thoroughly. Breadth is of less importance than depth when trying to understand writings that describe the experiences of another person (Patton, 1990). These narratives were written as a result of three different course assignments: dialogue journals, personal philosophy statements, and autobiographies. All three of these assignments were designed to help students understand the various ways their "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) effects their teaching style, educational philosophy, and curriculum decisions. Therefore, these writings provided a strong blend of personal narrative and professional discussion.

I analyzed these narratives in two ways: I analyzed them individually, and then I consulted the authors about the intent of their writing. Individual analysis was a two-step

process. First, using definitions and qualifiers from my literature review as a guide, I labeled each passage of the narratives as indicative of either organizing, reflecting, or inquiring. Next, I connected each passage to the stereotypical stances of gender communication. These stereotypical stances included stances of problem solving by way of an emotional process (Flynn, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Gray, 1991; Fasteau, 1974) and a longing for connection with others (Gannett, 1991; Gilligan, 1982). Unlike the narrative purposes, elements of gender communication were not mutually exclusive in these writings. That is, a passage could contain a given level of emotional process in problem solving and a desire (or lack of desire) for connection with others. This cross-labeling technique allowed for a better overview of the interaction between the functions of personal narratives and gender. For the second step of individual analysis, I searched for trends among the narratives. That is, I used inductive inquiry "to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the [documents] under study. . ." (Patton, 1990, p. 44).

After cross-labeling each passage and comparing them to other passages, I consulted the authors about their work. The goal was to have the authors confirm or disconfirm my interpretations of their writing and to have the authors add details that might better help characterize their text in relation to the other writings and the literature.

## Findings

Table 1, on page 8, offers a summary of the labeling of each author's writings. In this section of the paper, I offer examples of narrative from each author to highlight the ways the writings serve specific rhetorical functions. More importantly, however, is the integration of the gender-based communication literature into these different functions. In some cases, I also mention the authors' confirmation of my findings. After offering the examples from the narratives, I will summarize the findings and offer implications for future research.

Table 1: Communication factors within the rhetorical functions of narratives

| | Organizing | Reflecting | Inquiring |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Angie** | 4 emotional connections | 4 emotional connections | 0 Inquiries |
| **Mary** | 4 logical connections | 3 logical connections<br>3 emotional connections<br>1 emotional separation | 0 Inquiries |
| **Cindy** | 6 logical connections<br>1 logical separation | 4 logical connections<br>2 emotional connections<br>1 logical separation | 0 Inquiries |
| **Sue** | 13 logical separations<br>4 logical connections | 0 Reflections | 0 Inquiries |
| **Judy** | 6 logical connections | 1 emotional reflection | 0 Inquiries |

**Angie**

Organizing. Angie, a former Christian Missionary in Russia, brings structure to her teaching by blatantly addressing the two kinds of problem solving--the logical manipulation of product versus the emotional process--by distinguishing between two types of knowledge. More specifically, she separates "head knowledge," the theoretical, from "heart knowledge," the practical. She explains that teachers should help students "transfer knowledge from their books and their heads into their hearts and their life." It is this transformation that is the "essence of meaning making experiences."

Angie expands her belief that problem solving ought to involve more than theoretical "head knowledge." Teachers, Angie argues, should "create environments in which students can take safe risks. This will enhance the creative processes of our students and build their self-confidence."

These statements speak volumes about her view that the process of teaching is an emotional affair of the heart that requires connections with others. That is, Angie rejects the option of controlling the theoretical product in order to embrace the type of emotional and process-oriented thinking that communication theorists write about.

When I asked Angie to clarify the differences between the two types of knowledge, she pointed to the fact that "head knowledge" is an unapplied concept. The application--process--of that concept adds meaning and value. Thus, in organizing her beliefs about teaching, she emphasizes the importance of emotional problem-solving strategies that are taught when she "connects" with students.

The connection aspect can be further seen in another example of her pursuit toward the organization of her teaching. In her statement of personal philosophy, Angie emphasizes the importance of a teacher as one with whom students can make connections:

> As care-givers, we will take a genuine interest in students as people: in their friends, in their life, in their family, in their choices, in their career. We will focus on their being, not just on their performance. We will listen to them. We will talk to them as people. We will show our love by our actions. We will mother them. We will remind them how to behave. We will catch them doing it right and let them know that we saw them. We will praise them as much as we can.

Reflecting. Angie's view of teachers as connection points for students comes largely from reflecting on her childhood. In fact, through most of her autobiographical writings, Angie's thoughts on organization as a teacher were inter-woven with reflections of her own experiences as a student; and just as her organizational writings were often

based on emotion, her reflective narratives emphasized the emotional processes of her educational history.

As a student, for example, Angie longed for connections with teachers and felt the pain when connections were not made: In one example, she discusses having a bicycle wreck the week after studying bicycle safety at school. The wreck prompted in her an immediate emotional desire to connect with a teacher who she feared did not like her: "What will Mrs. Gilliland say?" The teacher did make a negative comment about her skinned knees, elbows, and cheeks. From the teacher's refusal to connect with her in a positive way, Angie says she learned what not to do to students--make them feel alienated.

**Mary**

Organizing. Mary, a professor of medical technology at a large public university, defines her role in health care by saying that her greatest responsibility is to "the health and well-being of the people of the state of Tennessee." This connection to others is not one that she feels emotionally, but it is one that is dictated to her by the first objective of the mission statement of her university: "To graduate health professionals and scientists who are professionally competent and in whom high ethical standards have been instilled, with appropriate emphasis on underrepresented groups and on meeting the health work force needs of Tennessee." An interesting paradox develops from the connection between her job and the people of Tennessee: Her desire for connection developed from the manipulation of a text--an act indicative of separation.

Later, however, Mary digresses from separation to connection. She cites the continued growth of her students as the goal of a teacher's relationship with students, and she emphasizes her role in the educational process: "By sharing my past and being highly accessible, I develop in them interpersonal communication skills which will be essential in their careers for cooperative learning and problem solving on the job."

In her philosophy of teaching, Mary elaborates on the importance of a personal connection between teacher and student:

> It is through example that students 'see' an instructor's commitment to patient care and ethics, professional organizations, and continued education. I let my students know of the positions I have held in my professional organizations and, that after eighteen years of practical experiences, I have returned to school to pursue advanced degrees. Hopefully, by the example of my commitment to my profession, students will be encouraged to follow my lead.

Reflecting. When considering her first semester of teaching--a semester which started soon after her husband died in an accident--Mary's desire for connection gained emotional momentum. The trauma of her husband's death combined with the natural stress of first year teaching lead to an emotional response to entering the classroom:

> Knowing that fifteen people were expecting something from me each day helped me hold on when I thought I was flying off the world. The hardest day was the first one. How would I be able to speak? What would their reactions be?

Mary's connection with students goes further than hoping they will follow her career path. The reflections become emotional connections: "Those students have a special place in my heart. They did not judge me. They made me laugh a lot that year. . . . I could not have been prouder of them if they had been my own children."

**Cindy**

Organizing. Cindy, an inner-city high school science teacher, follows Mary's lead in justifying various aspects of her career logically as opposed to emotionally. What's interesting here is that she organizes her career logically by discussing a topic that could lend itself to an emotional outburst:

> Many times it is difficult to keep a positive attitude about teaching and learning at the particular school I am at now. However, I dwell on the positive and try to

> ignore the negative. . . . To further my positive attitude about learning and students, I try to associate only with teachers who also have a positive attitude. I try to distance myself from the negative teachers and their nasty attitudes.

In a conversation with me, Cindy portrayed these teachers as a product that she did not want to become. That is, if she saw these teachers as destinations of her own teaching path, she would be forced to ask herself why she puts forth the effort to be a good teacher. Instead of accepting these teachers as an inevitable product toward which she is becoming, she discusses the process that she is traveling as a teacher and offers a logical defense of that process:

> Teaching is a difficult job that requires a professional attitude and approach. Keeping up with the most current trends in one's field and specialty is very important for the classroom. As learning philosophies evolve so must the teacher. I have always taken advantage of each learning experience as it has come available. Each year many avenues are open for the learning of new content and current ideas in teaching. Science literacy is an important concept to me as the United States becomes more and more technologically oriented, more complicated in terms of modern science such as genetic engineering, DNA testing, ecological concerns, and the abundance of chemicals available in everyday life. I want to be educated as much as possible.

Cindy's explanation of her own process approach to education does not stop here, however. She expands on the process with an explanation of school as a subprocess:

> It was a difficult decision to return to school on a regular basis and have to pay for the tuition. In the past all the classes I have taken were paid for, so paying my own tuition has been difficult. However, the experience is helping me to be a better teacher and shaping my career goals in the years I have left in education. I want to be a life-long learner, and the years spent in graduate school have fueled my learning appetite.

Reflecting. Not only do Cindy's writings offer insight into her organizing process as a teacher, but also they offer insight into the ways connections influence those processes. In fact, one explanation for Cindy's logical approach to her career processes comes from a connection that she made with a teacher. This teacher warned her that if she did not try to control her temper, she would "get into serious trouble someday." It was the words of this teacher that made Cindy consider how she was perceived by others. From that point on, she tried to control her temper.

Another reflection further demonstrates the importance of connections by focusing on the differences between Cindy's relationships with people in the "smart class" and in the "average class":

> I feel that lacking the association with my "smart" friends affected my attitude toward my career plans. Many of these "smart" friends are professional people making much more money than I am. Of course, many of them are not and make less than me. However, I do think that the teachers treated us differently and had greatly different expectations.

Cindy also relates evidence that her experiences lead to the belief that student/teacher connections are beneficial:

> From these experiences, I decided that my students should be treated in a way that they will understand that what they have to say is important and someone is there to listen. Many times students are subjected to injustices by fellow students, parents, and other teachers. The students' needs are important and should be addressed by the strongest of measures. Never should the needs of the students be ignored or made less of.

**Sue**

Organizing. In responding to views presented to her, Sue does not use an emotional connection with others. Instead, she develops a topic logically. For example, in

responding to a presentation made during the class, Sue says: "During her presentation, she mentioned several times that teachers should not correct students' mistakes because that would hurt their self-esteem. Well, making mistakes is part of the learning process, and a teacher's responsibility is to guide students."

At another point in her journal, Sue continues with a logical development by responding to an author whose work she read:

> At the beginning of the article, the author says that "the pupil's progress is often conceived as a uniform steady advance undifferentiated by change of type or alteration in pace. . . ." I don't think anybody truly believes that students advance at the same pace; the real argument is how to deal with individual difference. Chinese and Japanese societies allow no excuses for lack of progress in school; regardless of one's current level of performance, opportunities for advancement are always believed to be available through more effort.

In responding to both the presentation and the reading, Sue uses the speaker and author's words as an entry point for her. This point of entry--the manipulation of words-- would be one, many critical theorists argue, that would be more likely for a man to use.

When Sue turns her writings toward discussing the communication process, she continues using a logical approach to problem solving to organize her views on education:

> According to Confucian, although a person is born with a basically virtuous nature (including the seeds of compassion, shame, diligence, courtesy, modesty, and a sense of right and wrong), he or she does not necessarily preserve it forever. Environmental influence can exert a profound impact on the preservation and nurturing of this nature.
>
> However, people are not simply the victims of life's circumstances. External influences are not so crucial in determining a person's development as is self-cultivation. Virtue will be maintained and developed only if the individual continues to cultivate it throughout the life span. Even under difficult conditions,

> people should not cease cultivating their original nature. Indeed, a person can benefit from unfavorable circumstances, gaining strength by struggling against adversity

Sue's writings also point to connections with others as a way of organizing her own teaching. She suggests that connections are not only desirable, but avoiding them is impossible: "There is rarely a moment in the school day when a teacher is not confronted with situations in which his or her philosophy of learning and/or teaching influences the choices that he or she makes." Sue continues by citing questions that teachers ask in order to make sound curriculum and pedagogical decisions: What is the good person? What is the good society? How does one learn? What should one learn? It is the teacher's answer to these questions, Sue argues, that creates a connection between the teacher's personal philosophy and the students.

Later, Sue makes a similar argument to demonstrate the importance between student/teacher connections:

> Since I believe that adult responsibility for the guidance and direction of the immature is inherent in human nature, teachers are responsible for a systematic program of studies and activities to develop the recognized essentials. Informal learning through experience initiated by the learners is important, and abundant opportunities for such experiences should be regarded as supplementary rather than central.

**Judy**

Organizing. Early in her writings, Judy, an instructor in a school of nursing, says that she organizes her teaching by remembering that she was once in "their [her students'] shoes." All of her organizations stem from this connection. For example, Judy elaborates on the importance of education as a problem-solving process that involves connections between teacher and student:

> As a teacher, I have high expectations of my students. Through verbal and non-verbal feedback, I feel it is important for me to send them positive messages which let them know my expectations are high. . . . I also believe teachers should give students the freedom to take risks, as well as to think critically and be creative. It is OK to ask a "stupid question," whatever that is, or to be wrong. How else are you going to find out what is right? Providing a safe, supportive environment must be created in order for learners to take risks and learn.

Even Judy's basic definition of learning points to an organizing process built on connections:

> I believe learning occurs over a period of time and is measured by a change in behavior. I subscribe to the humanism theory of learning in which there is a natural tendency for people to learn and that learning flourishes in an encouraging environment.

As Judy elaborates on this environment, it becomes clearer that connections with others causes an environment to be productive: "It is up to the teacher to create a positive learning environment in which there is trust, acceptance, and respect. This helps a student's self-esteem and improves their academic performance." Later, Judy again explores the importance of connections in the learning process. She lists feedback as a factor that facilitates learning: "Good techniques for positive feedback include praise, constructive criticism, positively worded corrections, and suggestions of alternative methods of performance." Notice that in all of these characteristics of positive techniques for feedback, Judy promotes positive relationships with others.

The discussion on connections is one that is developed through a distinct line of logical development. She discusses the role of students, knowledge they will need, and the various tasks they will perform.

Reflections. Judy's valuing of connections comes alive in a short story she wrote. In this story, she recounts the real-life trials of a student as she tried to master course goals:

"She was frustrated. I was frustrated; and her peers were frustrated, for we were all cheering her on to success." The support of Judy and the other students lead to success. This success created a stronger connection between teacher and student: "I was so impressed with her creativity and desire to learn. The perseverance of students never ceases to amaze me. With just a little encouragement, [she overcame] any difficulty in order to graduate and take her state board exams."

## Summary of the Findings and Discussion

One major discovery from this study was a more definite realization of the ambiguities among the categories under study. Even with the presence of these ambiguities, however, the extent and importance of connections as a means of organizing teachings, the seeming value placed on logic in organizing teaching, and the lack of inquiries to initiate research were all issues that have implications for the use of narratives.

In summarizing the findings, the ambiguity between the two areas under study must be recognized. Though I separated findings by the purposes of narratives, this separation was for rhetorical purposes. Most women, as the excerpts from narratives demonstrate, pointed to reflections in order to justify their teaching organization. Similarly, ambiguity between the separation and connection stances of gender communication caused problems in coding the data. Mary's writings provided an example. She connected with others, but it was a connection dictated to her by a text, not a connection that compelled her personally. This ambiguity was compounded when trying to label the logic versus emotion dichotomy. Even with the clarifications from the literature review, determining the level of emotion in a passage of text was difficult. As a result of all of these ambiguities, categorizing passages of narrative was often problematic.

In spite of these difficulties, it should be obvious that the women in my study did focus on connections with others. This, in itself, is not unusual since part of the assignment did prompt writing about relationships. What is noteworthy, however, is the

extent to which all of the women tried to make connections with others. Four of the five writers examined in this study discussed the significant importance that either a teacher, student, or colleague had on their lives. It was only Sue who never reflected on relationships with others. Three of the five elaborated on the importance of connections with more than one specific person in their writings.

All of the women did place emphasis on the processes--not products--of problem-solving in organizing their teaching. The combination of teaching being a process and the natural propensity of women makes this finding intuitive. What is not intuitive, however, is the development of these processes: Most women rejected the opportunity for emotion in organizing their teaching and approached topics logically by manipulating a guiding text, responding to a speaker's words, or rationalizing their own beliefs. As table 1 shows, Angie was the only writer who overwhelmingly rejected logic in favor of emotion as an organizing tool.

It is most interesting that in a graduate level class none of the authors engaged in questioning or inquiry as a means of initiating further research. Some of the authors did use questioning as a rhetorical function, but the questions were not designed to inspire further research and help determine a methodology for inquiry. Instead, the questions were used as an organization or structural tool and were answered by those who asked them.

## Implications

As mentioned, this research is designed only to serve as a starting point for a dialogue about the inter-relationships between personal narratives and gender in the field of education. Given both the small magnitude of this study and the ambiguities inherent to qualitative research of this type, to make generalizations would be unwise. However, this research needs to be duplicated and expanded in an effort to answer questions growing out of this study. Two of these questions deal with the nature of narrative assignments. A third question relates to the propensities of students to use narratives naturally.

To what extent do the parameters of a personal narrative assignment dictate the nature of the resulting text? One of my subjects suggested that the guidelines for and purposes of the writings--that is, the nature of the assignment--causes writers to focus on specified criteria. That is, in a teacher assigned short-story, the writer was writing about a meaningful process or event from her history. Thus, process will be emphasized, and connections with others will probably be included. However, in a journal entry designed to react to a course reading, manipulation of the text--typically a male form of discussion--would be natural. If future research yielded that assignments themselves played a large role in the narrative construction and content, professors of teacher education should think more clearly about the types of personal narrative assignments that they implement into their curriculum. It could be suggested that asking a woman to respond to a reading--manipulate a text separated from others--is not the best way to teach female teachers about their field. Conversely, it could be argued that assignments and activities requiring collaboration--connection with others--are biased against men. Further research is needed in this area to determine the effects the assignment has on the outcome.

How can personal narrative assignments encourage students to engage in more in-depth inquiry toward the goal of raising questions for research? Even with my limited sample, it seems odd that, in a graduate-level class, there were no instances of narrative being used as an inquiry impetus in the research process. If this absence is pervasive in other graduate education courses where personal narratives are valued, philosophical and practical questions about the structure of narrative assignments come into play. Traditionally, research has been an important aspect of graduate-level education, so it would seem desirable that course assignments encourage research.

Does the extent to which women used logical justifications for their teaching send a signal to theorists about the naturalness of women using journals? It would be quite surprising to Gilligan, Tannen, and other theorists who examine communication from a gender perspective that the women in my study organize their teaching through logical

justifications more often than through a focus on emotion. If this is a wide-spread phenomenon in the use of journals, it would seem important. After all, for women to use logical justifications and controls instead of focusing on emotional processes is contradictory to the results of past research and theory. More research needs to be done in order to see if these results are duplicated with other populations.

Questions such as these should be answered in order to perpetuate the dialogue about the impact gender has on both curriculum design and teacher education when personal narratives are used as professional tools. Such a dialogue will lead to a more solid integration of personal narratives with teacher education.

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